

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 10782 150000Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00
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UNCLAS NEW DELHI 10782
E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EWWT, IN
SUBJECT: REPEAT OF TELEGRAM BOMBAY PORT CONGESTION

FOLG SENT ACTION NEA DELHI INFO CALCUTTA MADRAS
FM BOMBAY JUL 11 REPEATED TO YOU.

QTE
UNCLAS BOMBAY 1677

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAT, IN
SUBJ: BOMBAY PORT CONGESTION

REF: BOMBAY 1463

1. FURTHER TO REFTTEL, THERE HAS BEEN NO PERCEPTIBLE IMPROVE-
MENT IN THE BOMBAY PORT CONGESTION. ACCORDING TO BOMBAY PORT
TRUST (BPT) PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER, ON JULY 3, 1978 THERE
WERE 88 SHIPS AWAITING BERTHS. THESE INCLUDE 28 WAITING IN
MID STREAM, 46 REGISTERED FOR BERTHS BUT DEPARTED FOR OTHER
PORTS TO RETURN LATER, AND 14 WHICH ARE PREPARING TO UNLOAD
CARGO. JULY 7 PRESS REPORTS CLAIM THERE ARE NEARLY 100 SHIPS
AWAITING BERTHS. CURRENTLY THERE IS A 30-DAY WAITING PERIOD
FOR A SHIP TO GET A BERTH, ALTHOUGH A 10-DAY WAITING PERIOD
IS CONSIDERED NORMAL DURING THE MONSOON.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 10782 150000Z

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS OF JULY 1 TWO SHIPPING
CONFERENCES (I CQUEI G KARMAHOM) HAVE RECENTLY NOTIFIED

SHIPPERS OF THEIR INTENTION TO INCREASE THE PORT CONGESTION
SURCHARGE FROM THE CURRENT 15 PERCENT TO 25 PERCENT SHOULD
THE PRESENT LEVEL OF PORT CONGESTION PERSIST.

3. AS REPORTED EARLIER, BPT AND SHIPPING COMPANIES ATTRIBUTE CONGESTION TO "SLOW-DOWN" AND "WORK TO THE RULE" AGITATION BY SOME SECTIONS OF PORT AND DOCK WORKERS. DISCONTENTMENT PERSISTS IN AT LEAST THREE UNION COMPONENTS:

A) OVER 800 CRANE OPERATORS BELONGING TO THE BOMBAY PORT TRUST EMPLOYEES UNION (BPTEU) ARE DEMANDING OVERTIME PAYMENT FOR EXTRA WORK AND RECRUITMENT/TRAINING OF ADDITIONAL CRANE OPERATORS TO WORK IN RELIEF. BPT CLAIMS IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO FIND QUALIFIED CANDIDATES WILLING TO FILL OPERATOR VACANCIES AT EXISTING WAGE LEVELS. CRANE WORKER DEMANDS ARE CURRENTLY BEING NEGOTIATED BETWEEN BPTEU AND BPT OFFICIALS, BUT NO RESOLUTION IS IN SIGHT.

B) ABOUT 255 HARBOR PILOTS, BELONGING TO THE BOMBAY PORT PILOTS' ASSOCIATION (BPPA) HAVE BEEN ON "GO-SLOW" FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS, DEMANDING INCREASED WAGES AND IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS. BOMBAY HARBOR PILOTS' WAGES RANGE FROM 2,000 - 2,500 RUPEES PER MONTH, MUCH LESS THAN AMOUNT PAID TO INDIA MASTER MARINERS IN INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING. INDICATIVE OF THIS WAGE PROBLEM IS THE FACT THAT THERE ARE CURRENTLY 14 UNFILLED HARBOR PILOT VACANCIES. BPT SOURCES TOLD

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 NEW DE 10782 150000Z

US THAT CAPTAIN KARNIK OF BPPA IS CURRENTLY IN NEW DELHI DISCUSSING THE ABOVE GRIEVANCES WITH MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT OFFICIALS.

C) SLOW OFF-LOADING OF FERTILIZERS AND EDIBLE OIL BY FOOD CORPORATES

OF INDIA (FCI) EMPLOYEES, BELONGING TO THE TRANSPORT AND DOCK WORKERS UNION (TDWU) ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO CURRENT PORT CONGESTION. FCI EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING "WORK-TO-RULE" AGITATION FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS IN PROTEST AGAINST FCI MANAGEMENT DECISION TO MEET DEMAND BY ASSIGNING EXTRA OFF-LOADING WORK TO CONTRACTORS WHO WILL PAY AN ANTICIPATED WAGE OF APPROXIMATELY RS.4/DAY TO CASUAL LABORERS AGAINST THE CURRENT WAGE OF RS.20/DAY PAID TO FCI

EMPLOYEES. TDWU BELIEVES CONTRACT LABOR WILL ERODE ITS FUTURE BARGAINING POSITION. THE FCI AND TDWU ARE NEGOTIATING, BUT THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS OF AN AGREEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

4. COMMENT: CURRENT BOMBAY PORT CONGESTION THAT STARTED IN

MAY 1977 WHEN PBTEU WORKERS WENT ON AN ELEVEN DAY STRIKE (ENDING MAY 21) WHICH RESULTED IN A BACKLOG OF 45 SHIPS AWAITING BERTH. SUBSEQUENTLY LABOR PROBLEMS HAVE COMPOUNDED THE BACKLOG TO THE CURRENT 88 SHIPS AWAITING BERTH. HOWEVER, EVEN SHOULD CURRENT LABOR PROBLEMS BE RESOLVED IN THE NEAR FUTURE, WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT PORT CONGESTION WILL BE REDUCED TO ACCEPTABLE LEVELS IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, BECAUSE THE NUMBER OF SHIPS CALLING AT BOMBAY PORT CONTINUE TO INCREASE WELL BEYOND THE CAPACITIES OF THE PORT'S PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND EMPLOYEE LEVEL WHICH HAVE REMAINED STATIC. THE FOLLOWING FIGURES TEND TO SUPPORT THIS CONCLUSION:

YEAR TONNAGE HANDLED NO. SHIPS ENTERED
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 NEW DE 10782 150000Z

(IN MILLIONS OF TONS)

75-76	16.79		2,736
76-77	17.37		3,387
77-78	16.74	H	3,487

WHILE TONNAGE HANDLED HAS BEEN MAINTAINED AT ABOUT THE SAME

LEVEL FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS, 7.1 OR 7.4 PERCENT MORE SHIPS

ENTERED THE PORT IN 77-78 THAN IN 75-76. OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS DOCK WORKER EMPLOYMENT HAS REMAINED CONSTANT AT APPROXIMATELY

30,000.

(BPTEU MEMBERSHIP IS 10,000; TDWU IS 16,000; GENERAL WORKERS UNION (GWU) IS 500 AND IS THE ONLY UNION WITHOUT CURRENTLY ARTICULATED GRIEVANCES; THE REMAINING 3,500 IS NON-UNION LABOR). THERE HAS BEEN NO MAJOR EXPANSION OF PORT CARGO HANDLING FACILITIES IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS.

RAIL AND HIGHWAY ARTERIALS AT THE PORT ARE INADEQUATE AND THERE ARE NO PLANS TO IMPROVE THEM. SEA LAND SERVICE INC., EDISON, N.J. 08817 HAS PLANS TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENTLY OPERATED CONTAINERIZED CARGO HANDLING FACILITY. THESE PLANS ARE LIKELY TO BE RESISTED BY THE UNIONS AND IN ANY CASE ARE NOT LIKELY TO HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT ON PROJECTED PORT CONGESTION. EARLIER PLANS TO BUILD OTHER DOCKS WITH RAIL AND HIGHWAY ARTERIALS ACROSS THE HARBOR AT NHAVA-SHEVA ARE UNLIKELY TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, AS GOVERNMENT IS GIVING PRIORITY TO OTHER PROBLEM SECTORS.

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PAGE 05 NEW DE 10782 150000Z

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